



The Frequency of Holy Communion

By the Righteous Elder Pachomius
Founder of the Skete of the Holy Fathers, Chios, Greece



Holy Orthodox Metropolis of Boston
1476 Centre Street
Roslindale MA 02131
(617) 323-6379
www.homb.org

Who would not weep at the ignorance and wretched state of our contemporary clergy? Where has it ever been heard, that the Christians should go to Church, seeking to receive Holy Communion, and the priests hinder them, saying to them, "Is Communion soup? Forty days have not yet passed since you received Holy Communion, and you come to receive again?"

In like manner, regarding the first week of the Great Lent, I know of many men and women who keep the three-day fast [an optional tradition of fasting from food and water], and they go to church on Wednesday for the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, and the clergy do not allow them to receive Holy Communion, saying, "Just the other day you were eating meat, and today you come to receive Communion?"

"And secondly," they say, "the Presanctified is for the priests, and not for the laity." Fie! on our ignorance and lack of understanding! You, on the one hand, O ordained man, are eating meat the night before, and many times you are even drunk, and perhaps also irreverent, and you go to serve the Liturgy, and you hinder the one who has been fasting with so much reverence? And you deprive him of so much benefit and sanctification?

Do you see what lack of learning our priests have? "The Presanctified," say they, "is for the priests, and not for the laypeople." St. Basil the Great says, "I commune my parishioners four times a week." St. John Chrysostom and the entire Church of Christ do likewise. They had this custom of Communion four times a week. And since the Liturgy is not served during the weekdays in Great Lent, the Holy Fathers in their wisdom devised to have the Presanctified, only so that the Christians might have the opportunity to commune during the week; and you say the Presanctified is only for the ordained?

And observe, O reader, that as long as this discipline prevailed, and the Christians communed frequently, their hearts were warmed by the grace of Holy Communion, and they ran to martyrdom like sheep.

Therefore, the priests who hinder the Christians from receiving the Immaculate Communion should know well that they sin greatly. I do not say that the people should commune simply and indiscriminately, but that they should approach with the fitting preparation.

However, I heard what some priests say: "I" (say they) "am a priest and I serve the Liturgy frequently, and I commune, but the layman does not have this permission." In this matter, O priest, my brother, you are greatly mistaken. Because, in the matter of Holy Communion, the priest differs in nothing from the layman. You, O priest, are a minister of the Mystery, but this does not mean that you have the right to receive frequently, and the layman does not. In this matter I can bring you many proofs from the Saints, demonstrating that it is permitted equally to bishops and priests and laypeople, both men and women, to partake of the Immaculate Mysteries continuously – unless they have been married a third time. As many as have married three times commune three times a year.

I have myriads of proofs concerning this issue, but which one should I present to you first? Chrysostom, Clement, Symeon of Thessalonica, David? As I said, which one should I mention first? In this matter, I can bring you so many proofs, I could fill a whole book! For this cause, I cut short what I am saying and tell you only this in brief. If you don't want the Christians to commune frequently, why do you hold the Holy Chalice, and display it to the Christians, and cry out from the Holy Bema, "With the fear of God, faith and love, draw near, and approach the Mysteries that you may commune"? And yet again, you yourselves hinder them, and you lie openly? Why, on the one hand, do you invite them, and, on the other, do you push them away?...

